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Experience fruits of patience

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A western commentator, William Patron, has observed: 'One of the fruits of Islam has been that stubborn durable patience which comes out of the submission to the absolute will of God.'

This observation is indeed very apt. Islam attaches great importance to patience. Most of the verses of the Quran have a bearing, directly or indirectly, upon this virtue. In truth, patience is an attribute without which the very thought of Islam is unimaginable. The present world is designed in such a way that here one has repeatedly to face unpleasant experiences, inside as well as outside the home. Now if people were to fall to wrangling on all such occasions, they would fail to advance along the path of human progress. That is why Islam has placed great emphasis on patience, so that by avoiding all unpleasantness, man may continue his onward journey towards the higher goal — God-realization.

The Quran repeatedly stresses the need for patience. In chapter 31, we are enjoined to remain patient in these words, "Endure with fortitude whatever befalls you." (17) In chapter 8, we are told to "have patience. God is with those that are patient." (46)

The only way to deal with the irksome side of daily living is to exercise patience. Patience will ensure that whenever one has some bitter experience, he will opt for the way of tolerance rather than that of reaction to provocation. It will enable one to absorb shocks and to continue, undeterred, on one's onward journey.

Patience, as well as being a practical solution to the problems faced in the outside world, is also a means of positive character building. One who fails to exercise patience, gives free rein to negative thoughts and feelings, develops a personality which is likewise negative while one who remains patient is so morally bolstered by his own positive thoughts and feelings that he develops a positive personality.